



The Mountain-Prairie Review

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Askerooth Named 2002 National Wildlife Refuge System Employee of Year

By Doug Staller

Some people know Kristine Askerooth as a tireless advocate for tallgrass prairie. Others recognize Askerooth, the wildlife biologist at Tewaukon National Wildlife Refuge in southeastern North Dakota, as the coordinator of the North Dakota Junior Duck Stamp Contest. Still others think of her as a migratory bird expert, protector of prairie pothole habitat, mentor to those planning careers as wildlife biologists or teacher of women interested in the outdoors.

The National Wildlife Refuge Association choose Askerooth as NWRS Employee of Year from about 2,500 employees, in recognition of her many diverse accomplishments since she joined the Tewaukon staff in 1990.

Askerooth is responsible for the perpetual protection of more than 6,000 acres of prairie wetland habitat. Refuge assistant manager Jack Lalor gave a big thanks to Kristine that the future generations will be able to enjoy the delicate petals of endangered western prairie fringed orchids, the courtship flights of bobolinks, the spring dance of the last indigenous North Dakota prairie chicken population and a wealth of other species.

One of Askerooth's greatest assets is her ability to reach diverse audiences and communicate enthusiastically with them about the value of the prairie pothole region to migratory birds.

As the Junior Stamp coordinator for North Dakota, Askerooth has partnered with funding groups as diverse as the Dakota Territory Gun Collectors and the local women's culture club.

Askerooth worked with other Service employees, the North Dakota Heritage Program, The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society, the U.S. Forest Service and the people that make native prairie their home to evaluate and protect tallgrass prairie habitat.


In the conclusion of his letter, Lalor says, "She brings the wildlife habitat conservation message and the Refuge System mission to the people, and the people to the habitats that are the result of her hard work. Her leadership skills, professionalism, dedication and ability to recognize and develop the creative resources of others are an asset to the Refuge System and the Fish and Wildlife Service".

The award also reflects positively on Askerooth's co-workers at the Refuge and throughout North Dakota. "We are excited about Kris getting this recognition," notes Tewaukon Complex manager Doug Staller.

She received her award April 3 during the 67th Annual North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Dallas.

Congratulations to Kristine Askerooth!

Near-Real-time Fire Map:

You can view the GeoMac, a new interagency-sponsored system which accesses satellite data to track fire status. 

Click <http://www.geomac.gov>

Retiree Reunion in Spearfish

By Steve Brimm

The 4th Annual FWS Retiree Reunion and Fisheries Celebration is scheduled for May 17-19th in Spearfish, SD. Hosted by the Booth Society and the D.C. Booth Historic NFH, over 200 retirees and spouses will be joining FWS employees, American Fisheries Society members, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks employees, and other invited guests for a weekend of activities.

The weekend begins on Friday the 17th with a reception at the Spearfish Convention Center. Saturday events will include a retiree meeting, a noon fish fry, an afternoon program at the hatchery, and a banquet on Saturday night. Sunday will be a tour day of the Black Hills. Included in the hatchery program on Saturday will be an unveiling ceremony for a memorial to the early American fishery worker, reflections on the early fish pioneers, and the dedication of the hatchery's fish railcar exhibit.

We will also open our museum for the season and debut a new exhibit on some of the oldest National Fish Hatcheries in the country as we celebrate 130 years of the National Fish Hatchery System.

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Celebrating a Century of Conservation



“Why Should the National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Matter to All of Us?”

By Melvie Uhland

Whether directly or indirectly, all Service employees have probably been hearing about the upcoming Refuge System Centennial. We all know that March 14, 2003 will mark 100 years of commitment to wildlife and habitat conservation since President Theodore Roosevelt established the first refuge at Pelican Island, Florida. Still, what’s all the fuss?

From an outreach perspective, the National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial is a VERY BIG DEAL. This event offers a “once-in-a-lifetime” opportunity for the Service to not only highlight the Refuge System’s conservation history, but to showcase all the work of all Service programs. Building awareness and support for our mission and work will help us establish and strengthen conservation partnerships. Stay tuned to this “Centennial Corner” for outreach news on how you can help with Centennial outreach effort!

Refuge Centennial Commemorative Blanket

By Susan Saul
Pacific Region Centennial Coordinator

Friends of Mid-Columbia River Refuges have developed a National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Commemorative Blanket. This traditional wool trade blanket, 64” x 80”, has rich hues of blue, green, brown, tan and off-white and is made in the USA by Pendleton Woolen Mills. It comes with an ultrasuede commemorative label and a hang tag that describes the symbolism of the design, which, in the Pendleton tradition, is based on Native American themes and geometric patterns. You can view the blanket design at

<http://region1.fws.gov/Centennial/blanket.htm>.

12th Annual Kid’s Fishing Day:

The Bozeman Fish Technology Center’s (BFTC) 12th Annual Kid’s Fishing Derby will be held Saturday, June 1st from 8 A.M. to 4 P.M. at the BFTC during National Fishing Week. Animals of Montana will be present with a grizzly bear, mountain lion, and a gray wolf to keep the excitement level high. Hopefully they don’t like to fish!

You can contact Greg Kindschi if you have any questions or would like to attend and/or possibly help with this event. Call Greg at (406) 587-9265 ext. 124.

Pallid Recovery Efforts

By Steven Krentz

Pallid Sturgeon stocking this year has gotten back on track after three years of careful investigations about an iridovirus that was found in pallids in hatchery populations. We have now found endemic iridoviruses in many sturgeon populations around the world, including Russia, Italy and many locations in the United States.

Pallid juveniles from Garrison Dam NFH in Riverdale, North Dakota and Gavins Point NFH in Yankton, SD, are being stocked this spring in the Missouri River above Ft. Peck in Montana.

These stocking efforts are part of the stocking plan identified in the Pallid Sturgeon Recovery Plan. All of the fish are PIT tagged. Our Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance Offices in Bismark, ND, Pierre, SD and Columbia, MO (Region 3) will be busily surveying these related fish over the next few years to document survival, movement, habitat preference and other key information that will help recover the species. The propagation is but one component of the plan. Efforts are underway in cooperation with the Corps of Engineers to improve habitat by modifying flows and by structural measures.

Amazing True Story About The Man Who Saved Gunnison

By Sharon Rose

After a trip to the Regional Office, which always left him in an enlightened state of mind, Mike Blendon, Refuge Manager at Alamosa-Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge, was making his way back home to Alamosa. Fire was already on his mind as he had seen the billows of smoke over Green Mountain as the Bailey fire was going strong west of Denver.

As he was driving through Poncha Pass, he noticed smoke and flames not far from the side of the highway. After a short hike over to see what the source was, Mike could see that a fire, probably started by lightning, was beginning to gain momentum with no one around but him. He hurried back to his car, donned his Nomex gear, picked up what tools he had with him and headed back to try some of his refuge fire fighting skills.

As Mike was busy wishing he had put that shovel back in his truck before this trip, a local landowner noticed the flames and hustled over and started doing what he could to help douse the flames. Between the two of them they were able to put out the 100-square foot fire, exchange names and thank yous and no doubt, save the entire town of Gunnison. Not a bad accomplishment considering it involved a trip to the RO!

Celebrate American Wetlands

By Mary Gessner

May is American Wetlands Month. It’s a wonderful opportunity for the Service to join in celebration of the uniqueness, beauty, and importance of wetlands through on-the-ground projects, activities, and events with our partners.

The Izaak Walton League of America is coordinating the American Wetlands Campaign, sponsored by the Service and other agencies, organizations, and corporations. The theme for 2002 and 2003 is Bogs, Potholes, Pools: Protect America’s Unique Wetlands. You may find the event sponsors may add their activities to those already listed on the website:

<http://www.iwla.org/sos/awm/events>. We encourage you to participate in these events, or have field stations sponsor activities to help the Service educate and inform communities and local groups about the importance of wetlands to fish, wildlife and people.



Cultural Diversity Annual Celebration

By Carrie Cordova

In previous years, the Division of Diversity and Civil Rights has been responsible for organizing events to commemorate and celebrate Special Emphasis Programs (SEP) recognized by Federal executive orders and Departmental policies. Programs recognized are National African American History Month, National Women's History Month, Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month, Older Americans Month, Gay and Lesbian Pride Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, National Disability Employment Awareness Month and Native American/Alaska Native Heritage Month.

This past autumn, the Program Assistant Regional Directors (ARD's) asked fellow employees to volunteer to participate on a committee to explore options that may increase employee participation in scheduled SEP events. Members of the committee include Carrie Cordova, Ricardo Estrada, David Hightower, Debbie Lee, Gerri Purvis, Shirlee Terada, and Jeff Roets. The committee recommended that the Region move to an annual diversity event, celebrating our American heritage and culture. The plan was approved by the Regional Director.

The committee has been busy recruiting speakers and entertainment and will also be offering ethnic food sampling. The event will be held Wednesday, May 22, 2002, from 8:00am - 3:30 pm. The celebration will be both indoors and outdoors. There will be booths that display items collected from fellow employees that will represent the fabric of our nation. The booths will be located in the conference room on the third floor where they can be viewed throughout the entire day. Ethnic food sampling, live music and dancing will be enjoyed during the lunch hour and will be held outside on the west side of the parking lot. If the weather does not cooperate all activities will be held in the third floor conference room.

On a side note, the committee is seeking items for the booths from fellow employees. If you have an item that you are willing to share with fellow employees, please contact any member of the committee of the DCR Office.

Let us celebrate our diversity and embrace our differences and similarities that make America such a wonderful place to live.

A Party For The Birds

By Karen Miranda Gleason

On May 4th in Stafford, Kansas, Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton, Fish and Wildlife Service Director Steve Williams, and about 275 other guests enjoyed a beautiful day at Quivira National Wildlife Refuge celebrating Quivira's dedication as the 18th site in the U.S. under the Ramsar Convention of Wetlands of International Importance. After lunch served by the Friends of Quivira, the Secretary joined our Regional Director Ralph Morgenweck, Refuge Supervisor Ron Cole, and Legislative Affairs Specialist Matt Kales for a tour of this unique refuge, led by the Refuge Manager Dave Hilley.

100 Years of Bull

By Wade Fredenberg

The Creston Fish and Wildlife Center is celebrating "100 Years of Bull", with a museum display developed at the Central School Museum in downtown Kalispell, Montana. One portion of the exhibit highlights the importance of bull trout to the local natural history and culture and includes numerous early 1900s anecdotes gleaned from the local newspaper. A second portion of the display tracks the history of Creston National Fish Hatchery, focusing on its roots as the Glacier Park National Fish Hatchery when it was built in 1939.

Numerous old photos, a collection of bull trout fishing tackle, and an authentic 75-year old mount of a 22-pound bull trout add to the historic flavor. According to a 1901 newspaper article: "The bull trout is often sluggish and easily taken, but unless it is already dead, or suffering from senile decay, no 8-ounce bamboo rod and light line will stop one with less than a quarter mile of line." The main purpose of the exhibit is to illustrate the historical value of this species to our culture, with the idea that people who appreciate history will be more supportive of restoring populations of the threatened native bull trout.

The hatchery exhibit focuses on the first years of the hatchery, when the singular goal was to stock fish in Glacier National Park. One theme, illustrated with entertaining photos, includes the use of pack animals to haul the fish over rugged high mountain terrain. A second theme tracks the evolution of fish food at the hatchery; from chopped liver, bison spleens, and other parts once obtained from the National Bison Range, to the modern use of pellets.

The exhibit will be on display throughout 2002 and is expected to draw over 5,000 visitors. Following that, it will be available as a traveling exhibit to other sites.

Contact Mark Maskill or Wade Fredenberg for more information about the museum.

Working the Web

By Ralph Morgenweck

It's estimated that over 50% of Americans now use the Internet on a regular basis. For some it is their primary means of accessing information. We know our Region 6 web site is accessed over 200,000 times each month.

Our most popular web page? Totals from a recent month reveal our Refuges and Partners for Fish and Wildlife pages are the most popular, with 40,000 and 20,000 hits respectively. Close behind was the External Affairs Press Release page, with over 18,000 hits. The Endangered Species page followed with 16,000 hits. Our most popular critter page? No contest here – the gray wolf page enjoyed over 11,000 hits.

It's no secret why some of our pages are popular; links from related pages help, and simple web address marketing produces quick results. Of course it helps to have an informative and attractive page too.

Check out the PFW page at <http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/pfw> to see why it's so popular.

Our Regional Web Master Jim Renne (303-236-5322 x-234) can assist field stations in the design, upgrade and maintenance of your web pages. Training is also available locally and at NCTC in web design.

Jim also has a new link on the R6 homepage entitled "Create a Website for Your FWS Office": <http://www.r6.fws.gov/CreateAWebsite.htm>.

Every Station in Region 6 has a story to tell- your history, your goals, your successes. And your web page may be the best way to deliver that story to the broadest audience.

Is your web site ready? What story does it tell?

Congressional Affairs

By Matt Kales



Congress is currently addressing two pieces of legislation that hold potentially significant implications for the Mountain-Prairie Region: The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 also known as the Farm Bill, and the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003, also known as the Defense Authorization Bill. On May 2, the House of Representatives voted 280 to 141 to approve the Farm Bill Conference Report. The Senate will likely act on the bill soon. Key conservation provisions of the new Farm Bill include:

- \$2 billion for the Conservation Security Program, a new program aimed at encouraging conservation on working lands;
- \$254 million for the Grasslands Reserve Program, another new program intended to protect rangeland through conservation easements;
- \$700 million for the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, which will pay farmers to protect and create wildlife habitat.

On May 1, Members of the House Armed Service Committee marked up the Defense Authorization bill, approving amendments to the Endangered Species Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. These amendments would exempt Department of Defense installations with Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans from critical habitat designation and provide the military with an exemption from take prohibitions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act for military readiness activities. The House Resources Committee (Hansen, UT-R), the authorizing committee with jurisdiction over the ESA and MBTA, did not request a referral to consider the bill. The full House will consider the bill in the near future.

For more further information, contact Matt Kales, Legislative Affairs Specialist, at (303) 236-7917, ext. 257 or at Matt_Kales@fws.gov

Leadership Announcement

By John Blankenship

The Service is presently announcing the Stepping Up to Leadership Program. I am encouraging employees who are currently in grades GS-11 and 12 to apply for nomination as participants in this Program.

This Program is designed for employees who have demonstrated, by their performance, that they have high potential for assuming positions of increasing leadership responsibility. The goal of this program is to provide a cadre of skilled candidates to fill Project Leader positions, Branch and Division Chief positions, and other mid-level management positions. We anticipate that these positions will be vacated through retirement over the next several years.

You can obtain a copy of the Program announcement, application, supervisory appraisal, and National Conservation Training Center application by going to the following website <http://training.fws.gov/led/courses/led6072.html>.

Completed application packages should be sent to the Personnel Office postmarked no later than midnight, **Friday, May 31, 2002.**

If you have any further questions, please contact Gerri Purvis via e-mail at gerri_purvis@fws.gov or on (303) 236-5414 extension 271